DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 498 CS 010 210

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TITLE Improving Reading Skills and Attitudes through the Reading and Writing Connection.
PUB DATE Jun 87
NOTE 52p.; M.S. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Basal Reading; Beginning Reading; Grade 2; *Language Experience Approach; Primary Education; Reading Ability; *Reading Attitudes; Reading Comprehension; Reading Improvement; *Reading Skills; *Reading Writing Relationship; Surveys; *Vocabulary Development

ABSTRACT

A practicum was implemented to improve the sight-word vocabulary and attitudes toward reading among 22 second-grade students reading below grade level. The program took approximately 45 minutes a day, 2 days a week. The language experience approach was used in conjunction with word processors. The different types of activities included dictated stories that related to basal stories, retelling basal stories, reconciled basal reading lessons, probable passages, interactive reading, generative writing, writing-related science entries, writing-related social studies entries, creating vocabulary pages using context clues, and illustrating stories and skill pages. Results indicated that students improved their sight-word vocabulary of both the Dolch words and the basal vocabulary lists, which were used as pre- and post-tests. Students also improved in their attitudes toward reading, as evidenced by a reading attitude survey. Other improvements were noted in comprehension, the use of context clues, and oral expession. Results also indicated that the Language Experience approach combined with a reading and writing connection had a positive affect on vocabulary development and attitude among underachievers in reading. (Nineteen references are attached. Appendixes include: Reading Attitude Survey, Pre-primer Dolch Word List, Primer Dolch Word List, First Grade Dolch Word List, Dolch Basic Word Lists Pre- and Posttest Results, Ginn Level 5 Vocabulary List, Ginn Level 6 Vocabulary List, Ginn Reading Word Lists Pre- and Posttest Results, and Reading Attitude Survey Pre- and Posttest Results.) (Author/MG)

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IMPROVING READING SKILLS AND ATTITUDES THROUGH THE READING AND WRITING CONNECTION

By

Elizabeth Elmquist

A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement
of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Science

June, 1987

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Elizabeth C. Elmquist

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Abstract

Improving Reading Skills and Attitudes Through the Reading and Writing Connection
Elmquist, Elizabeth, 1987 Practicum Report, Nova University, Center for the Advancement of Education
Descriptors: Language Experience Approach/ Primary Education/ Reading Instruction/ Reading Difficulties/ Sight Vocabulary/ Vocabulary Development/ Reading Comprehension/ Reading Writing Relationships/ Basal Reading/ Reading Programs/ Teaching Methods/ Beginning Reading

The practitioner implemented a reading program for a small group of second grade students reading below grade level. The two primary purposes of the program were to improve the sight word vocabulary and attitudes toward reading among these children. The program took approximately 45 minutes a day, two days a week. The Language Experience Approach, in conjunction with word processors, was utilized by the practitioner. The different types of activities included dictated stories that relate to basal stories, retelling basal stories, reconciled basal reading lessons, probable passages, interactive reading, generative writing, writing related science entries, writing related social studies entries, creating vocabulary pages using context clues, and illustrating stories and skill pages. Results revealed that these students improved their sight word vocabulary of both the Dolch words and the basal vocabulary lists, which were used as pre- and post-tests. Students also improved in their attitudes toward reading, as evidenced by a reading attitude survey. Other improvements were noted in comprehension, the use of context clues, and oral expression. It was concluded that the Language Experience Approach combined with a reading and writing connection has a positive affect on vocabulary development and attitude among underachievers in reading.

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She talked with me prior to implementation; she discussed and planned activities and shared the results as it progressed.

Practicum Title Improving Reading Skills and Attitudes Through the Reading and Writing Connection

Student's Name Elizabeth Elmquist

Program Site Edgewater Public School Date June 30, 1987

Observer's Name Charlotte H. Mooney Charlotte H. Mooney
(please print ---------- and sign)

Observer's position Primary Resource Teacher, Edgewater Public Sch.

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten): The project had significant impact as demonstrated by the children's enthusiasm to share their work with me. Furthermore, I saw growth in the teacher as demonstrated by her confidence, acquaintance and creativity. Many children will benefit through the years from Mrs. Elmquist experience in doing her practicum.

Chapter I

Purpose

The setting for this practicum was an elementary school located in a rapidly growing middle class town on the east coast of central Florida. The organizational pattern of this school is not consistent with the other elementary schools in the county in that it serves only grades K-5. The sixth grade was moved, along with the sixth grades from five other elementary schools in the county, to the Middle School, a pilot program started in the 1986-1987 school year.

This school has experienced a significant 67 percent increase in enrollment in the last four years, having gone from 675 students in 1983 to 1,000 students in 1985 and back to the present enrollment of 956 after the loss of the four sixth grade classes. The administration consists of a principal, an assistant principal, and an administrative assistant. There are presently 37 regular self-contained classrooms, 1 language class, 2 varying exceptionalities classes, 1 1/2 speech teachers, 1 1/2 music teachers, 1 1/2 art teachers, 1 1/5 guidance counselors, 3 full-time physical education teachers, 2 full-time media specialists, and 1 full-time primary resource teacher. The VIS unit was lost last year because the free and reduced lunches dropped below 25 percent.

In order to accommodate the increased enrollment, 10

new classrooms were built three years ago. Fourteen classes are presently being taught in portables. A new addition of 22 classrooms is being built for September of 1988 to house the Exceptional Student Education Center for the southeastern part of the county. This center will house 180 Exceptional Student Education children.

Three years ago, this school was selected as one out of three schools in the county to become a pilot school for the Writing to Read program. At that time, the music room was converted to house the computers to be used by the kindergarten classes. The following year all first grade classes received computers in their classrooms to pilot Primary Editor, an extension of Writing to Read. This year computers were placed in the classrooms of grades 2-5. The second grade classrooms have five computers each and grades 1, 3, 4, and 5 have four computers each.

The students involved in this practicum were in a self-contained second grade class consisting of 22 children: 13 boys and 9 girls. All the children are Caucasian and from middle class backgrounds. The practitioner of this practicum was the teacher for this class.

All schools in this county have instituted the Pupil Progression Plan. Students are given tests on minimum skill competencies that must be passed in order for the child to be promoted to the next grade. All grades must pass 85 percent of these pupil competencies. In the third and fifth grades,

students are given a State Assessment Test to determine if they have mastered these basic skills.

This county has also adopted a single basal reading series, The Ginn Reading Program, which is a developmental pacing of instruction through strand authorship. The basal readers are leveled K-8 with skills in each level building upon the skills in decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary that were presented at the previous level. Students are moved to a new level after unit tests show mastery at their present level. Unit test scores are recorded on Pupil Profile Cards and kept in the students' cumulative folders. Each grade has specific levels which students are to master during that grade.

Students in a second grade class who are considered to be working on grade level are expected to complete Levels 7 and 8 of the Ginn Reading Program. They are also expected to master 100 percent of the first grade Dolch words as one of the pupil competencies. Of course, not all children learn to read at the same rate and every class will have children who are reading below grade level.

At the beginning of this school year, eight of the children in this class were identified as reading below grade level. After administering the Ginn Placement Test, reading the Pupil Profile Cards, and observing the pupils' reading habits, these children were placed in Level 5 to review basic skills. Linguistic readers were used as supplementary readers

and first grade phonics skills were reviewed. These children appeared to dislike reading, showed little motivation during reading group, and exhibited no interest in independent reading during free time.

Two of the children were in a transitional first grade class and four repeated first grade. The other two children transferred from out of state. Two of the children started attending LD Resource classes this year for one hour a day and two others had been referred for testing for possible placement in LD Resources. Since little progress had been made using the basal, phonics, and linguistic models of reading, the postulation was made that these models of reading were not meeting the needs of these children. The postulation was also made that the children in the present program had developed negative attitudes toward reading due to repeated frustration which continues to slow down their progress.

A reading attitude survey was given prior to the implementation of this program (see Appendix A). The results revealed that, out of 20 questions about reading, six out of the eight children scored 55 percent or more negative answers.

The practitioner gave a pretest of the pre-primer, primer, and first grade Dolch basic word lists (see Appendices B, C, and D). The results showed that the children in this group had not yet mastered the basic sight words

taught at the first grade level (see Appendix E).

The practitioner also administered a pre-test of the vocabulary words for Levels 5 and 6 of the Ginn Reading Series (see Appendices F and G). The test results showed that the students had not yet mastered the vocabulary words presented in Levels 5 and 6 (see Appendix H).

This problem existed for the second grade students in this study who were performing one and two years below grade level in reading. According to the pupil profile cards, six out of the eight children had repeated Levels 5 and 6 for the second time. The Dolch words and vocabulary words that should have been mastered in order to achieve success at the next level had not been mastered. Through observation, this practitioner saw that this inability to read the basic sight words was causing these children problems in both silent and oral reading and reading comprehension. It was also causing frustration and a lack of interest in reading.

The purpose of this practicum was to improve the sight word vocabulary and attitudes toward reading in a group of eight second graders who were reading below grade level. The following objectives were established to measure the success of the program:

1. Over a period of 10 weeks, the students in this second grade reading group would be able to read the pre-primer, primer, and first grade Dolch word lists with 100 percent mastery. (See Appendices B,

C, and D for copies of these word lists.)

2. Over a period of 10 weeks, the students in this second grade reading group would be able to read the Level 5 vocabulary lists with 100 percent mastery and the Level 6 vocabulary lists with 95 percent mastery. (See Appendices F and G for copies of these word lists.)
3. Over a period of 10 weeks, the students in this second grade reading group would show improvement in attitude towards reading as evidenced by an attitude survey given before and after the implementation of this practicum. (See Appendix A for a copy of this survey.)

There are three reasons that these objectives were chosen:

1. Second grade students are expected to read the first grade Dolch words with 100 percent accuracy in order to pass pupil competency CLA24.
2. In order to progress through the Ginn basal reading series with success, vocabulary words need to be mastered.
3. A positive attitude toward reading can improve reading performance.

Chapter II

Research and Solution Strategy

Writing and reading have traditionally been viewed as almost separate, unrelated, cognitive processes. Reading was considered a passive process and writing was considered to be an active one. However, reading is no longer being described as a passive activity in which the student merely decodes material that is fed to him. Instead, according to Graves (1985), the learners are actively using prior knowledge to construct written material, therefore becoming active participants in the reading process. When a learner becomes an active participant in the reading process through writing activities, reading skills are strengthened (Graves and Stuart, 1985).

Ten years ago, John Henry Martin, a retired educator, introduced a new program in education that is having an impact on the teaching of reading. As described by Wallace (1985), the Writing to Read program begins in kindergarten, starting with the natural language of children, and provides a variety of ways for them to express their language. Children progress from the active process of writing to the more passive process of reading. Martin, as quoted by Wallace (1985, p.20), believes that "children can learn to communicate more effectively and rapidly if their early education stresses writing first, rather than reading".

The Writing to Read program started as a computer-based instructional system designed to develop the writing and reading skills of kindergarten and first-grade students. Since its introduction into the school curriculum, it has been followed by Primary Editor, a word processing program for K-5 and Writing Assistant for grades 3-6.

The Writing to Read program is implemented within a learning center where students move through a variety of stations, including writing tables, work journals, listening centers, typewriters, and computers to convert their natural language into writing. For five years, Martin (1984) tested his strategies for implementing the system with more than 900 South Florida students in public and private schools. A two-year National Demonstration Project, designed to validate Martin's South Florida experiment began in 1982. In its first year, the demonstration project involved 10,000 kindergarten and first-grade students in more than 100 schools in 17 school systems. The instructional design of Writing to Read has a strong basis in educational theory and action research. Martin developed each part of the system by observing students and referring to his knowledge of accepted principles of learning theory (1984).

The Writing to Read program has a strong attraction for educators who are followers of the language-experience approach (LEA) to teaching reading. Allen, as cited by Lapp and Flood (1983), an advocate of LEA (that of using the

already existing language of the child, combined with the child's prior knowledge and experience, to develop the reading, writing, and listening skills), states the sequence of steps in the language process in the order of listening, speaking, writing, and then reading in his statement,

> What I can think about, I can talk about,
> What I can say, I can write,
> What I can write, I can read.
> I can read what I write and what other people can write for me to read (Lapp & Flood, 1983, p.318).

When put into practice, the language experience approach to reading combines the reading and writing process by having the students dictate a story to their teacher about an experience. This story becomes the basis for vocabulary and reading comprehension exercises. According to Kinney (1985), this model of teaching reading has three definite advantages for use with primary children:

1. First, the student write the materials themselves, so vocabulary and language patterns are their own.
2. Second, they will be writing and then reading about something they have actually experienced, which insures that the concept is within their grasp.
3. Third, because they have written the story,

> interest and motivation will be high (Kinney, 1985, p.855).

Grabe and Grabe state that the language experience approach has influenced not only the theory but the practice of reading instruction. Its advocates regard reading as an active search for meaning. They assume that meaning cannot be found in the printed words, but in the reader's ability to draw upon personal experiences in response to the words. Readers must acquire both specific cognitive skills and an orientation toward the reading act.

> Unless the reader appreciates the purpose of reading (i.e., attaching meaning to text), appropriate cognitive skills will be slow in developing. The child may, for instance, arrive at the mistaken impression that reading is naming the words appearing on the page (Grabe & Grabe, 1985, p.508).

Donald Graves, who has been studying writing and the writing process since 1972, believes that reading and writing are innately a part of the world of children. They seem to have a propensity for self-expression through writing from the time they can hold a writing object and for imitating adult-like reading of what they have scribbled:

> Children want to write. They write the first day they attend school. This is no accident. Before they went to school, they marked up

> walls, pavements, newspapers with crayons, chalk, pens or pencils...anything that makes a mark. The child's marks say, 'I am', (Graves, 1985, p.3).

Donald Graves tells of the discoveries he made about the writing-reading connection when he conducted a two-year project at the public elementary school in Atkinson, New Hampshire. He and his associates expected to find a common pattern of development of language skills among children. Graves felt that:

> The sequence and thinking in the curriculum for teaching language skills was out of whack because they were based on research that focused more on methods of teaching than patterns of learning. Although much had been done to plot the normal stages of development followed by beginning talkers, little had been done on the development of beginning readers and writers. Since school curriculums imposed an artificial sequence, children rarely got a chance to follow a natural progression when learning to read and write (Graves & Stuart, 1985, p.42)

Graves hoped to map out the sequence children naturally follow as they learn to write, so that teachers would know what to expect and when to teach certain skills.

After some trial and error attempts at beginning the program, teachers gave up part of their reading time to writing time. The first and third grade children chosen for the research were allowed to write anything of their choosing, pulling subjects from their prior knowledge and experiences. Restrictions were not placed on the students' spelling, grammar, or neatness.

Nearly a year after the classroom phase of the study was completed, researchers found exceptions to every rule in trying to define a natural sequence of language instruction. However, other successes of the project substantiated the positive relationship between writing and reading:

> Tests and interviews showed that the children in the project classrooms had a better understanding of the use of various punctuation marks than did children from neighboring classrooms where punctuation drills prevailed. The researchers also found that the children spent approximately 30% of their writing time reading their classmates' or their own work. So even though the teachers had replaced reading skills with writing, it was not surprising when reading scores were as high as, or higher than, they had been in previous years. But teachers also noticed a difference in their students'

> reaction to what they read (Graves & Stuart, 1985, p.46)

The language process is thought of in four parts and the general sequence for acquiring these processes is usually thought to be listening, speaking, reading, and finally writing. Emig, as quoted by Wilson (1981, p.897), calls them "first order and second order processes. First order (speaking and listening) are developed without formal instruction; second order (reading and writing) usually are developed with instruction." One assumption about the second order processes is that writing is an outgrowth of reading, so reading must occur before writing can begin. Most elementary reading programs are, in fact, based on this sequence, yet considerable evidence suggests that this sequence is not necessary and perhaps not desirable (Wilson, 1981). According to Falk:

> Reading, like oral language, should develop quite naturally when opportunities for reading in natural contexts and situations exist, and the procedure may also operate for writing development. Students must be allowed to form their own hypotheses about how written language works, and to test their hypotheses, they must write (cited by Wilson, 1981, p.897)

Falk further states that language, including writing:

> cannot be taught in the traditional sense, it must be learned through the tacit internalization of patterns and principles that are acquired through extensive exposure to and practical experience with the use of language in actual natural contexts and situations (edited by Wilson, 1981, p.897).

Given exposure to print, children will form expectations about the function, purpose, and system of written language as they begin to write from their experiences. This view of learning is expressed in the work of Britton on children's writing. He sees the process as learning by writing and learning to write by writing:

> There is a whole world of experince to be interpreted, and writing is a major means of interpreting it. Every time a child succeeds in writing about something that has happened to him or something he has been thinking, two things are likely to have happened. First, he has improved his chances of doing so the next time he tries; in other words, his piece of writing has given him practice. And secondly, he has interpreted, shaped, coped with, some bit of experience (Wilson, 1981, p.897).

Experience-based writing provides the natural context for learning to write, a point of view similar to that

expressed about learning to read by researchers like Frank Smith, Kenneth Goodman, and Roach Van Allen. As stated by Wilson, "...both reading and writing are learned, not taught" (1981, p.898).

The language experience approach to the teaching of reading and writing is being used successfully at Pierce Terrace School, a K-2 school in Columbia, South Carolina. The children are taught using the Success in Reading and Writing program, an eclectic approach to teaching reading. The Success program, developed by Anne Adams and others at Duke University in the late '70's, is based on the belief that children should be taught to read and write using the materials they will rely on later in life. Reading and writing are taught together and children have the opportunity to do both during a daily two-hour period. The Success program relies heavily on the children's use of language and the establishment of a good experiential background before any reading or writing instruction ever starts (George, 1986).

After being in use for six years, the program's results were satisfying. Based on scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test given in September and May each year, class means have risen from 1.9 to 4.0 in one second grade class, and from 2.0 to 4.2 in another. On the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, children in Success classes have repeatedly placed at the 70th to 80th percentile in language and

reading.

In the Success program, 90% of the child's allotted reading time is spent in actual reading and writing, one reinforcing the other. Children create written material drawing upon their own experience. There are no workbooks, ditto masters, vocabulary charts, or basal readers. Instead, children use newspapers, dictionaries, library books, and magazines to build on their existing language skills. There is no predetermined sequence of skills and children are not placed in the traditional reading groups based on ability levels (George, 1986).

Although reading educators profess the benefits of a language experience approach, many teachers do not use LEA because a basal program is the established core of the school's reading curriculum and there seems to be little time for anything else. A compromise could be to retain the basal reader as the core of the reading program to insure sequential order in presentation of skills and continuity of skills through the grades, but incorporate elements of language experience.

Baumann (1984) suggests that struggling readers may profit from a limited but regular exposure to LEA reading and writing. Two or three times a week, the teacher may require this group to write experience stories and add new vocabulary words to their word banks. "By infusing LEA into a basal program, students have a change of pace and these activities

promote positive attitudes toward reading. By incorporating the activities into a basal program, a teacher can be confident that basic skills are adequately being addressed," (Baumann, 1984, p.605).

Characters, events, or concepts in the basal story all suggest topics for dictated experience stories. The teacher need only plan an experience that is related to some element of the basal story, get children involved, and obtain a dictated account, which then can be used for a variety of reading activities related to the goals of the basal program (Jones & Nessel, 1985).

One first grade teacher found the use of the dictated story extended the total time spent on the basal unit by two days.

> After putting a copy of the story in their Experience Story Books, the stories were read independently and together. New sight words were acquired and added to word banks. During this tme, the basal story was also read. Many of the words in the LEA stories were found in the basal story, which provided reinforcement of the basal vocabulary words in another meaningful context. The LEA were also used to reinforce skills that were introduced or reviewed at that point in the reading program. The teacher also wrote a story which

> combined words from the basal story and the dictated story (Jones & Nessel, 1985, p.20).

According to Jones and Nessel (1985), teachers who have tried such integration find that it has decided advantages for all children. Good readers extend their sight vocabularies by reading their own dictated stories and may learn many new words each week beyond those introduced in the reader. They can also enjoy applying newly learned word attack skills to words in their own stories.

Children who make slow progress also benefit. They can move more slowly through the basal program, getting needed reinforcement by reading and re-reading their dictated stories. They may not acquire as many sight words or use word attack skills as well as the high achievers, but they will take just as much pleasure in the progress they do make, maintaining positive attitudes towards reading (Jones & Nessel, 1985).

As described by Reutzel (1985), another way to incorporate LEA into the basal reader would be to teach a Reconciled Reading Lesson. A close look at current basal reading lessons reveals not only a lack of instructional directions for teachers (Durkin, as cited by Reutzel, 1985), but also a flow in the sequence of activities. The Directed Reading Activity or DRA places background building first in the lesson sequence, yet teachers often find little in the current basal lessons to help them provide adequate

prereading instruction. So it is not surprising to find that very little teacher time is spent on prereading activities and instruction. Reversing the basal reading lesson sequence by beginning at the end and moving backwards with minor modifications can help accomplish at least one major goal associated with LEA. It shifts the emphasis away from evaluation activities after reading, and toward more instructional activities preceding reading.

By turning to the last section of the reading lesson in the teachers' manuals, often labelled "Expanding the Story" or "Language Enrichment Activities", Reutzel (1985) suggests that the teacher can find prereading activities that lend themselves to LEA. By using the enrichment activities first, along with the new vocabulary prior to reading, teachers can actively involve students with the unfamiliar events and concepts associated with the story they are going to read. Using these enrichment activities, what is often viewed as a postreading optional activity can become a prereading writing activity.

Following is Reutzel's comparison of the traditional Directed Reading Activity and the Reconciled Reading Lesson:

<u>Traditional Basal Lesson</u>

1. Introduce vocabulary
2. Introduce the story
3. Guided silent reading
4. Questions and discussions

5. Skill lessons and workbooks
6. Enrichment activities

Reconciled Reading Lesson

1. Enrichment activities to build background and introduce vocabulary.
2. Writing lesson explicitly related to the story.
3. Questions asked to alert selective attention.
4. Guided silent reading.
5. Assessment of story comprehension and skills learning.
6. Vocabulary assessment (Reutzel, 1985, p.196).

Wood (1984) suggests "probable passages" as a strategy to combine writing with the basal reading lesson. For probable passages, the teacher pulls vocabulary words for a selection that is going to be read and, with the students, categorizes them according to the elements of a story frame. The suggested incomplete story frame includes setting, characters, problem, problem solution, and ending. The students, looking at the vocabulary words, predict and write a probable story before reading the basal. After reading the basal story, they modify the predicted story to correspond to what actually occurred in the selection. Wood (1985, p.498)

states, "This team approach models the writing process for less proficient writers. It is also a means for the teacher to emphasize vocabulary, comprehension, and writing within a single lesson."

Interactive reading is another method to help children respond meaningfully to the basal reader by drawing and writing ideas that extend and complement the story. The youngsters' reactions become an interesting and integral part of the story so that each narrative contains unique illustrations and special commentary. Gemake states:

> The interactive approach stimulates interest and creativity for both able and disabled readers. The process applies the recent findings from brain research. As the words, sentences, and paragraphs appeal to the left brain, the right brain responds with images, pictures, and emotions (1984, p.462).

The method of interactive reading simply requires that children read a story. Then they relate their concepts, knowledge, and experiences to print and practice language arts skills while creating an individual and personal picture book to share with their classmates. The teacher divides the story into segments, with space provided at various points at which students can draw and write within the text. Their illustrations and words become a part of the completed story. They react to story settings by responding to characters'

actions and evaluating outcomes and consequences. This method uses writing to involve children in the reading process (Gemake, 1984).

Wittrock (1983) proposes another method of combining the basal reader with LEA that had shown improvement in reading comprehension and vocabulary development. "The Generative Model of reading is a method where children are taught to generate relations between stories they read and their own experience. Students write to show the relationship between their knowledge or experience and the text," (1983, p.601).

In a study with 58 fourth and fifth grade public school students (Linden and Wittrock, 1981), conventional reading instruction was compared with two experimental groups in which the Generative Model of reading was used. On a test of comprehension of the stories they read, the two experimental classes scored means of 31 and 29, while the control class taught by the children's regular teacher averaged 22.

In another study (Wittrock, Marks, and Doctrow, 1975), 468 fifth and sixth grade students were given familiar stories in which unfamiliar vocabulary words were inserted. Compared with the control groups given unfamiliar story contents, all the generative groups increased, from 50% to 100%, the number of new vocabulary words they could define on a vocabulary test. The study implies that students use familiar contexts to generate word meanings (Wittrock, 1983).

Vocabulary development can be a difficult process for

the slow reader. Nowhere in a basal textbook would we find a statement to the effect that one word is just as easy or difficult to learn as any other word, yet according to Sorenson (1985, p.80), "an examination of basal teachers' manuals reveals an overwhelming sameness in the instructional suggestions given for individual vocabulary words." Since numerous characteristics affect the difficulty of word learning, using prior knowledge and the image evoking value of words can have a strong effect on the ability to learn the word. Consequently, children learn words like "elephant" more easily than words like "freedom". "Words that are highly relevant to children's experiences are easier for them to learn than words unrelated to their experiences," (Sorenson, 1985, p.81).

Using LEA can also be an approach to reading in the content areas that allows excellent reinforcement of basic reading skills. Social studies and science units in the primary grades usually depend on concrete experiences, the same kinds of experiences that make the best stimuli for dictated stories.

According to Jones and Nessel,

> Plans for a content area LEA program start with the subject matter curriculum. The teacher plans objectives - related experiences that will develop key concepts through activity and discussion and then in

> summary yield a dictated story. Recording a dictated story after each experience will give children a chance to use new content vocabulary and reinforce concept learning. The story will also promote sight vocabulary and give practice in using word recognition skills (1985, p.20).

With the recent change in emphases in the teaching of reading and writing through the revolutionary Writing to Read program and the addition of microcomputers and word processors in the classrooms, teachers have an excellent means of expanding the traditional basal reading program. The method of using the microcomputer, however, is very important. According to Dudley-Marling,

> If micros are viewed as marvelous tools that can motivate and do some things particularly well, they may indeed improve our ability to teach children reading and writing. Used for drill and practice, they only provide more of the same (1985, p.391).

As suggested by Grabe and Grabe (1985), the microcomputer equipped with a word processing program such as the Primary Editor can mimic the traditional LEA in a fairly direct way and give it flexibility. The teacher can type in the story as the children dictate and then easily make modifications as the children decide that their story should

take a different direction, or to include extra information.

The printer generates copies of the finished product, and printing out the stories serves several useful functions. First, it provides motivation by producing personal copies that children can keep and share with their peers and parents. The students can add pictures to their copies to include more of their own ideas in the story. Second, the hard copy version is "book-like" and furthers the students' insight into the nature of books and the reading process. According to Grabe and Grabe (1985, p.509), "There is something concrete, yet slightly magical, about the process of telling a story which the teacher enters into a machine which in turn produces a book that you can end up holding in your hands and reading."

Language experience, writing, and microcomputers combined can make the basal reader model of reading more productive in both comprehension and vocabulary development. According to Calkins (1983), we have been wrong to view the processes of reading and writing as separate. Wrong because writing involves reading and because it reinforces and develops skills traditionally viewed as reading skills. Writing can generate a stance toward reading that is rarely conveyed through traditional reading programs. Calkins states, "When children are makers of reading, they gain a sense of ownership over their reading," (1983, p.188).

We are also wrong to separate the reading and writing

processes because there is no way we can watch writing without watching reading.

> While composing, children read continually. As they write they develop skills that are traditionally assigned to the domain of reading. These skills include selecting main idea, organizing supporting details, establishing sequence, discovering cause and effect, and developing vocabulary. Anything that relates to writing time relates to skills traditionally viewed as reading skills (Calkins, 1983, p.188).

Including language experience activities and creative writing in the reading instruction, with or without microcomputers, not only gives the student a purpose for reading, but also fosters positive attitudes toward the reading and writing processes. As Wiseman aptly states it:

> With an accepting and supporting atmosphere, we can produce language users who...are able to proclaim, 'You Sud be Prod of me I Wrote this all bie mi self,' (1984, p.344)

Chapter III

Method

This practicum involved the creation and evaluation of a reading program that combines the language experience model of reading with the basal reader while using word processors for process writing. There were two primary objectives of this program. The first was to increase the sight vocabulary of the students so they would be able to advance through the basal reading series with success. The second was to improve the students' attitudes toward reading.

The implementation plan occurred over a ten-week period for approximately 45 minutes a day, two days a week.

The students wrote a supplementary reading book that complements the basal reader both in vocabulary development and skill presentation sequence. Entries were written by both the teacher and the students on the word processors in the classroom. After printing the finished products, each student received a copy that was put into his or her own supplementary looseleaf book. These books were read during the reading group time as well as during independent reading time.

During the implementation period, the students wrote entries for their supplementary readers incorporating the following LEA methods:

1. Dictated stories that relate to basal stories;

2. Retelling basal stories,
3. Reconciled basal reading lessons,
4. Probable passages,
5. Interactive reading,
6. Generative writing,
7. Writing related science entries,
8. Writing related social study entries,
9. Creating vocabulary pages using context clues,
10. Illustrating stories and skill pages.

The word processors were used in a variety of ways. Sometimes the students wrote independently using the process method of writing - prewriting, writing, and rewriting. At other times, the reading group sat at the computer and dictated stories to the teacher. Students also wrote sentences independently at the reading table and the computer, and the teacher later compiled them into pages. Students were not pressured into using correct spelling or punctuation; instead, the teacher did the final editing for the finished product.

Following are some of the LEA activities that were used:

1. Students wrote true sentences by using specific vocabulary words and creating their own context clues.

Ex: A shark smells blood in the water.

2. Students wrote silly sentences about each other using specific phonics skills.

Ex: Could Jeremy ride a brown cow to town?

Ex: The skinny skeleton could not drink skim milk.

3. Troublesome Dolch words were reinforced by creating related sentences.

Ex: I could ride my bike to the store.

Ex: I could not ride it 20 miles an hour.

4. After reading a fictional basal story about a frog and a toad, the teacher read an easy science book about frogs and toads. Students wrote a comparison page of true facts about frogs and toads.

5. After reading a basal story about farm animals that talked, students chose different farm animals and wrote what they would say if they could really talk.

6. For reinforcing color words that were presented in a basal story, students did an art project that involved mixing colors. They collectively wrote the directions for the art activity in sequential order.

7. Students dictated their own <u>Tale of Peter Rabbit</u> stories to the teacher by putting themselves into a story.

Ex: <u>The Tale of Daniel Rabbit</u>

8. Students read wordless books that related to a basal story by dictating the story in their own

words as the teacher typed it on the computer.

9. After reading a basal story about animal homes, students did research in the media center with the help of the media specialist to find three interesting facts about an animal of their choice. Students typed the sentences on the computer.
10. Students collectively wrote a language experience story about a social studies lesson on pandas.
11. Students looked at the vocabulary words from a new story. They collectively wrote a paragraph about what they thought the story was about before reading it.
12. After writing a simple story, the teacher made copies leaving some words out. Students drew their own rebus stories.

After the first five weeks of the program, the teacher observed the amount of written material that was being put into the supplementary reader and the point at which the students were reading successfully in the basal reader. It was determined at that time that the students were moving at an adequate pace through the basal reader and no adjustments needed to be made on the amount of time being spent on the written activities.

Chapter IV

Results

The practitioner's preference of strategy to improve the vocabulary of students reading below grade level was to have the students write a supplementary reading book, with the help of word processors, that would complement the basal reader and offer the students more opportunity to use the words within their own language experience. It was hoped that, if successful, the improved reading ability would foster a more positive attitude toward reading.

Evidence to support the fact that a problem existed came from the practitioner's administering a test of the pre-primer, primer, and first grade Dolch words prior to the implementation (see Appendices B, C, and D). A test of the vocabulary words for Levels 5 and 6 of the Ginn basal readers, which these students had already read the previous year, was also administered (see Appendices F and G).

Students were only able to identify between 80 and 90 percent of the Dolch words correctly out of the 100 percent required to pass the second grade pupil competency (CLA24). Students identified between 58 and 90 percent of the Level 5 vocabulary words correctly and between 40 and 48 percent of the Level 6 vocabulary words correctly (see Appendices E and H).

At the end of the 10-week period, the word lists were

again administered to the students. A substantial gain in sight word recognition had taken place with every student. Students were then identifying between 90 and 100 percent of the Dolch words, between 80 and 100 percent of the Level 5 words, and between 66 and 98 percent of the Level 6 words (see Appendices E and H).

A reading attitude survey (see Appendix A) was administered prior to the implementation of the program, indicating that six out of the eight students tested had a high incidence of negative feelings about reading, scoring over 50 percent in negative responses. Seven students remained in the program for the duration. Of those seven, four substantially increased their positive answers, one slightly increased, and two remained the same (see Appendix I).

Besides the improvement in sight vocabulary identification and attitude, other improvements were observed by the practitioner:

1. Students who had appeared to dislike the reading group now showed enthusiasm during that time.
2. The students became more fluent in oral expression, being able to express themselves in complete sentences.
3. Students who seldom chose to read library books were selecting easy books to read during silent independent reading time.

On the whole, the objectives of this practicum were to improve the sight word vocabulary and attitudes toward reading of the students involved. The pre- and post-tests, the attitude survey, and teacher observation confirm that improvement in these areas did in fact take place. It should be noted that Student #6 was a near non-reader at the beginning of the school year and, due to his diagnosed learning disabilities, has been staffed into a self-contained class next year. He made the greatest improvement in vocabulary, showing an increase of 18 percent of the Dolch words, 32 percent of the Level 5 words, and 40 percent of the Level 6 words.

Chapter V

Recommendations

Since the results of this practicum convinced the practitioner that having students write their own reading materials has a positive affect on reading abilities and attitudes, and can reinforce the skills presented in the basal reader, it is recommended that similar activities be used with all reading groups during the entire year.

Since the students enjoyed reading their own supplementary books and would request reading from them instead of the basal reader, it became a highly motivating activity. Therefore, it is also recommended that, particularly with struggling readers, more time be spent on the LEA lessons and less on the basal readers. These students seemed less intimidated by their own books than they did by the basal reader. Since these activities do take time, in order to keep students moving at a pace recommended by the required Ginn program, some of the less interesting basal stories could be omitted and replaced by the LEA activities.

This reading program would be an excellent way to teach reading during PREP Summer School when the basal readers do not need to be used. Selected basal stories could be reread simply as a basis for the LEA activities and sequence of vocabulary and skill introduction. The activities can be adapted to any grade level, and care should be taken to use a

wide variety of activities to keep the motivation high. Having students each write one to three sentences held their interest, but long assignments had a negative affect on their attitudes.

The strategies developed for this practicum will be shared with both the reading and language supervisors in the district.

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APPENDIX A

READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

1. I am good at reading.
2. I enjoy the reading group.
3. I often read to myself at home.
4. I like having stories read to me.
5. Reading is easy for me.
6. Reading is hard for me.
7. I think reading is fun.
8. I wish we didn't have to learn to read in school.
9. I like to read out loud.
10. It makes me nervous to read in front of other people.
11. My teacher thinks I'm a good reader.
12. Sounding out words is easy.
13. Learning to read is important.
14. I would rather do anything else but read.
15. I feel good about myself when I read.
16. Reading is boring to me.
17. I like to get books for presents.
18. I get embarrassed when I read.
19. My parents like to read.
20. I think I could read better.

APPENDIX B

DOLCH BASIC WORD LIST

Pre-Primer Level

Name _____ Date _____

Clinician _____ Score _____

1. a
2. and
3. away
4. big
5. blue
6. can
7. come
8. down
9. find
10. for
11. funny
12. go
13. help
14. here
15. I
16. in
17. is
18. it
19. jump
20. little
21. look
22. make
23. me
24. my
25. not
26. one
27. play
28. red
29. run
30. said
31. see
32. the
33. three
34. to
35. two
36. up
37. we
38. where
39. yellow
40. you

APPENDIX C

DOLCH BASIC WORD LIST

Primer Level

Name _____ Date _____

Clinician _____ Score _____

1. all
2. am
3. are
4. at
5. ate
6. be
7. black
8. brown
9. but
10. came
11. did
12. do
13. eat
14. four
15. get
16. good
17. have
18. he
19. into
20. like
21. must
22. new
23. no
24. now
25. on
26. our
27. out
28. please
29. pretty
30. ran
31. ride
32. saw
33. say
34. she
35. so
36. soon
37. that
38. there
39. they
40. th s
41. too
42. under
43. want
44. was
45. well
46. went
47. what
48. white
49. who
50. will
51. with
52. yes

APPENDIX D

DOLCH BASIC WORD LIST

First Grade

Name _____ Date _____

Clinician _____ Score _____

1. after	15. has	29. over
2. again	16. her	30. put
3. an	17. him	31. round
4. any	18. his	32. some
5. as	19. how	33. stop
6. ask	20. just	34. take
7. by	21. know	35. thank
8. could	22. let	36. them
9. every	23. live	37. then
10. fly	24. may	38. thin
11. from	25. of	39. walk
12. give	26. old	40. were
13. going	27. once	41. when
14. had	28. open	

APPENDIX E

DOLCH BASIC WORD LISTS

(133 words)

Student	Words Missed: Pre-Primer Pre-Test	Pre-Primer Post-Test	Primer Pre-Test	Primer Post-Test	First Pre-Test	First Post-Test	Total Pre-Test	Total Post-Test	Percent Correct Pre-Test	Percent Correct Post-Test
1	1	0	5	2	5	2	11	4	92	96
2	3	1	10	5	12	7	25	13	81	90
3	0	0	7	0	14	0	21	0	84	100
4	2	0	5	1	6	0	13	1	91	99
5	2	0	11	0	6	0	19	0	86	100
6	3	1	15	1	8	0	26	2	80	98
7	2	2	6	0	6	2	14	4	90	97
8	2		9		3		14		90	

APPENDIX F

GINN LEVEL 5 WORD LIST

Birds Fly, Bears Don't

Name _____ Date _____

Clinician _____ Score _____

1. of
2. beautiful
3. swimming
4. yesterday
5. was
6. another
7. great
8. your
9. all
10. listen
11. hear
12. talk
13. know
14. fence
15. care
16. making
17. found
18. house
19. find
20. first
21. climb
22. down
23. cried
24. swim
25. after
26. pond
27. again
28. walked
29. happened
30. saw
31. three
32. kittens
33. white
34. mouse
35. they
36. jumped
37. toad
38. went
39. turtle
40. happy
41. thought
42. would
43. why
44. chick
45. duckling
46. too
47. bird
48. egg
49. digging
50. fly

APPENDIX G

GINN LEVEL 6 WORD LIST

Across the Fence

Name _____ Date _____

Clinician _____ Score _____

1. very	22. lying	43. while	64. chicken
2. I'm	23. live	44. far	65. please
3. floor	24. girl	45. enough	66. himself
4. kitchen	25. boy	46. over	67. should
5. place	26. catch	47. two	68. more
6. getting	27. animal	48. paper	69. brought
7. dishes	28. city	49. tie	70. blue
8. bear	29. walls	50. tight	71. near
9. friends	30. running	51. pull	72. mountain
10. lunch	31. every	52. surprise	73. woman
11. only	32. lived	53. tomorrow	74. color
12. hello	33. hopped	54. hard	75. next
13. nice	34. night	55. guess	76. lamb
14. ourselves	35. other	56. yard	77. fooled
15. which	36. turned	57. woods	78. senor
16. air	37. apple	58. everywhere	79. coyote
17. knew	38. roof	59. high	80. coming
18. road	39. gone	60. through	81. push
19. eyes	40. toy	61. raked	82. open
20. old	41. store	62. blew	
21. new	42. both	63. liked	

APPENDIX H

GINN READING WORD LISTS

LEVEL 5 BIRDS FLY, BEARS DON'T (50 words)

LEVEL 6 ACROSS THE FENCE (82 words)

	LEVEL 5				LEVEL 6			
	Words Missed		Percent Correct		Words Missed		Percent Correct	
Student	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1	4	0	92	100	19	2	77	98
2	21	10	58	80	49	28	40	66
3	18	5	64	90	43	13	48	84
4	9	0	82	100	22	2	73	98
5	4	0	92	100	22	3	73	96
6	21	5	58	90	47	14	43	83
7	5	1	94	98	24	3	71	96
8	5		94		18		78	

APPENDIX I

READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

Student	Positive		Negative	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1	15%	20%	85%	80%
2	25%	45%	75%	55%
3	30%	30%	70%	70%
4	35%	60%	65%	40%
5	45%	60%	55%	40%
6	45%	45%	55%	55%
7	65%	65%	35%	35%
8	70%		30%	

END

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March 21,1991